

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS MADRID 000513

SIPDIS

FOR EB/TPP/ABT/BTT - DEBORAH MALAC AND JACK BOBO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [TBIO](#) [TSPL](#) [ETRD](#) [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [KPAL](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: BIOTECH OUTREACH PROPOSAL: HIGHLIGHTING SPAIN'S BT CORN SUCCESS STORY

REF: STATE 15050

1. In response to reftel, Embassy's Biotechnology Working Group would like to propose creating a video to record and widely disseminate Spain's positive experience with planting and commercializing Bt corn. While local estimates for executing our project proposal are likely too high to be completely funded with EB's anticipated FY2004 public diplomacy money, we offer a couple of ideas on how to proceed if there is sufficient interest.

SPAIN AND Bt CORN: A SUCCESS STORY

2. Spain is the only country in the EU planting Bt corn commercially (for feed). The GOS first approved a Bt variety for planting in 1998, largely to combat losses inflicted by the European Corn Borer (ECB), and followed with approval of five additional varieties in 2003. Nine further approvals are reportedly forthcoming. The GOS originally limited planting surface to 25,000 hectares, but raised the level in 2003 to 50,000 hectares. A total of 32,000 hectares were planted in 2003, and the number is expected to rise this year.

3. Spain's experience is not only novel in that Bt corn has been planted and commercialized here for over 5 years with minimal opposition, but also in that there are no known cases of Spanish farmers who have suffered losses or damages because of "contamination" of their grain. Spanish corn traders have devised ways to ensure that the corn grain they buy in Spain has less than 0.1% GM content, including agreements with individual co-ops, a system of tracking the product starting from the seed invoice to the farmer, and an agreement with the Swiss company Societe Generale de Surveillance (SGS) to carry out testing and certification at various steps in the commercialization chain. In other words, Spain has dealt successfully with coexistence issues even in the absence of formal coexistence regulations sought by some EU member states. And they have done it while maintaining what many farmers have found to be a commercial advantage of Bt over non-Bt corn.

PROPOSAL: SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

4. Our idea is to disseminate the message of Spain's success by creating a short video recounting the history of Spain's planting and commercialization of Bt corn and highlighting the perspective of the farmers and traders involved. We believe that we would have cooperative Spanish partners in ASAJA, the main farmers union, CESFAC, the Feed Compounders Association, AGPME, the Corn Growers Association, FIAB, the Food and Beverage Industry Association, and, perhaps, the Spanish central and/or local governments. The video would be filmed in Spanish, making it a useful tool for Embassies in Latin America in educating farmers, traders, NGOs and government officials on Spain's experience. With subtitling, Embassies in Africa and Asia could do likewise.

5. Local estimates for filming and editing a fifteen minute video ranged between 17,000-24,000 Euros for a high quality studio product and approximately 5,000 Euros for an amateur version. While it may not be possible to fund the project exclusively out of EB public diplomacy monies, regional bureaus or other agencies (USTR, Agriculture) may be interested in pitching in. We could also approach the Spanish government to co-fund, particularly given the product's potential utility in Latin America.

6. Embassy would be happy to work with Washington on this project.

MANZANARES